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FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7514
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 WARSAW 001437

SIPDIS

EUR, DRL, H

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2018
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SUBJECT: CODEL SCHWARTZ/POLAND - NATO, EU MUST DO MORE ON
GEORGIAN SECURITY

Classified By: DCM QUANRUD FOR REASON 1.4 (D).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Polish National Security Advisor Wladyslaw Stasiak and prominent Polish MPs, including Sejm Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Krzysztof Lisek, told CODEL Schwartz that NATO must do more to address Georgia's security problems. If NATO does not offer MAP, it must offer something tangible to reassure Georgia that it is close to NATO. Polish MPs said there is no credible alternative to Saakashvili, but acknowledged he must do more to promote democratic reforms. Russia's invasion of Georgia was a "strategic mistake" that mobilized the EU to take a consolidated position. Georgia was confused by the EU's subsequent reversal on negotiating a new EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) During a December 16-17 stop in Warsaw en route to Tbilisi, Georgia, Members of the House Democracy Assistance Commission (HDAC) -- HDAC Chair Rep. Allyson Schwartz (D-PA), Rep. David Dreier (R-CA), Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA), Rep. Donald Payne (D-NJ), and Rep. Bill Shuster (R-PA) -- met with Polish National Security Advisor Wladyslaw Stasiak and his deputy Witold Waszczykowski. The CODEL also met with members of the Sejm (lower house of parliament) Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) and the Polish-Georgian Parliamentary Friendship Group, including FAC Chair Krzysztof Lisek (Civic Platform, PO), Elzbieta Jakubiak (Law and Justice, PiS), Michal Szczerba (PiS), and Pawel Zalewski (Independent).

¶3. (SBU) Rep. Schwartz expressed appreciation for Polish efforts in support of building democratic institutions in Georgia and elsewhere in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus and stressed the importance HDAC places on maintaining Georgia's integrity. Schwartz provided an overview of the CODEL's agenda in Georgia and requested Polish interlocutors' views on the situation.

SECURITY PARAMOUNT

¶4. (C) The four Polish MPs, each of whom had visited Tbilisi within the past month, expressed agreement that Georgia's main problem is security. Pointing out that Russian forces fire shots across the demarcation line every day, Lisek argued that European -- and possibly American -- peacekeepers should be sent to Georgia. If Russian forces cross the current demarcation line -- even if they fall back immediately -- they will show they have the upper hand. This would send a clear signal not just to Georgia, but also to Azerbaijani President Aliyev and other Caucasian leaders. National Security Advisor Stasiak offered a similar assessment, stating that Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan are watching the situation in Georgia closely, trying to evaluate U.S. and EU interest in regional stability. He argued that a strong Georgian security apparatus (both military and civilian) is essential to the success of reconstruction efforts.

15. (C) Stasiak said it is important for Georgia to feel that it is "close to NATO." If NATO does not offer MAP to Georgia, it must offer something else -- e.g., joint planning and exercises, training centers, formal political consultations, and/or support for Georgia's military transformation. "NATO has to be involved in Georgia's security," he said. Lisek identified an urgent need to consolidate NATO's position on Georgia and to operationalize Article V guarantees toward the Baltic states. He argued that NATO also needs to improve contingency planning in order to provide military and political guarantees. Waszczykowski said it was not enough to provide Georgia with a checklist. No matter how well Georgia prepares, other NATO members have to be convinced to admit Georgia. Szczerba expressed concerns about divisions in NATO, pointing out that Italian, German, Greek, and Spanish MPs at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Valencia had pushed for softer language on Russia's "disproportionate use of force" in August.

"NO ALTERNATIVE" TO SAAKASHVILI

16. (C) Lisek said he had been impressed by how skillfully the GoG had advanced reconstruction, noting that 9,000 houses had been built in 2.5 months. He lauded Georgian President Saakashvili's leadership in establishing effective government institutions. Lisek reported that he and other Polish MPs had met with opposition leaders in Georgia and had held a follow-up meeting with former Speaker Nino Burjanadze in Warsaw during the week of December 8. "We do not see any alternative to Saakashvili," Lisek said, to the agreement of the other Polish MPs. In addition to lacking public support

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and a viable party organization, Burjanadze and other opposition leaders are unable to articulate a clear vision that differs from Saakashvili's. "Burjanadze would not be able to mobilize the country the way Saakashvili has. In the countryside they refer to him as 'Our Misha,'" Lisek said.

17. (C) Jakubiak asserted that Russia is trying to destabilize Saakashvili by disseminating rumors that the USG plans to oust him in favor of Burjanadze. The GoR knows that the opposition would not be able to govern effectively, she said.

Putting the opposition in power will cause Georgian power structures to crumble and allow Russia to draw Georgia back into its sphere of influence. Jakubiak said many EU Member States support the opposition because they are tired of Saakashvili. "Although Burjanadze seems like Margaret Thatcher," Jakubiak argued, she has no supporting organization.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM NEEDED

18. (C) Noting that HDAC's primary goal is to promote vibrant democracies, Schwartz asked MPs for their views on efforts to encourage Saakashvili and the GoG to enact reforms that will let the voices of the opposition be heard. Stasiak said it was a pity that NATO had not offered MAP to Georgia, as it would have provided an opportunity to outline specific expectations for reform and hold out a prize for demonstrable progress. If the GoG fears for its future, he argued, it has little incentive to undertake democratic reforms or to promote transparent governance and coherent legal systems.

19. (C) Szczerba argued that Georgia would have to undertake democratic reforms in order to ensure its credibility within the international community. The EU and USG must "speak loudly" and outline clear expectations. Jakubiak stressed that Georgia is a weak state with poor transportation and communication networks, almost no military command and control system, and inadequate border controls. "Georgian society is in turmoil and in dire need of economic support. We cannot put all the blame on Saakashvili," she said. Jakubiak argued that more reconstruction assistance is needed to create space for democratic development and noted that

winter fuel shortages could further destabilize the country.

¶10. (C) Lisek acknowledged the importance of democratic reform, but cautioned that the situation on the ground had changed dramatically since August 7 -- "if the playing field were level, it would be easier." He advocated a more delicate approach, particularly given the preponderance of Russian influence and the fact that Georgia is the only democracy in the region. In addition to building a strong party, Saakashvili has created an effective administration and a loyal police force. He speculated that this was the reason Russian forces stopped at Gori. Moreover, he continued, opposition parties are weak not simply because of limited access to media and financing, but mainly because they do not offer credible alternatives. Georgia's last elections delivered results that correspond to public opinion.

EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS

¶11. (C) Although the invasion of Georgia had positive implications for Russian public opinion, Zalewski said, many Russian politicians believe it was a "strategic mistake." The GoR did not achieve its goal of regime change and Russia's reputation was damaged. Even worse, Russia's actions mobilized the EU to act in concert -- "this is Russia's worst nightmare" and an "unprecedented" development, particularly when compared to the European reaction to the Balkans crises in the 1990s. Prior to August 7, the GoR had perceived Europe as divided. Now, Poland and Lithuania are no longer isolated inside the EU. Zalewski added that the Georgians believe the EU can play a critical role in strengthening the conflict zone demarcation lines, which Russia has effectively blurred through their troop movements.

¶12. (C) Lisek agreed that the Russian invasion had briefly given the EU a "raison d'etat," but expressed regret that the consolidated position had been short-lived. The EU's decision to resume negotiations on a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), Lisek said, was confusing for the Georgians, who had expected the EU to continue to condemn Russian activity. Although some EU countries believe a new PCA is needed to address energy concerns, Russia does not have as much leverage as some believe, he said. He pointed out that Russia's high-sulfur oil can only be refined in Europe and argued that Russia needs a European market as much as Europe needs Russian gas.

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RUSSIA'S ENDGAME

¶13. (C) Asked about Russia's endgame in Georgia, Waszczykowski asserted that Russia is trying to regain its former sphere of influence. Russia is interested in reconstructing a bipolar world or, at least, re-establishing the "concert of powers" arrangement that existed in Europe for 300 years, in which Russia was one of a group of elite countries that acted over the heads of smaller states. Similarly, Russia prefers to deal with the "most important" NATO and EU countries rather than with all of their member states.

¶14. (C) Contrary to perceptions in parts of Europe, Waszczykowski said, Poland is not reflexively anti-Russian. "We view our relationship with Russia as an opportunity. Unfortunately, there are more problems on the other side." Polish interlocutors expressed interest in the incoming administration's views on Russia. Zalewski and Waszczykowski cautioned the USG against abandoning "values" and "principles" in favor of practical cooperation. Zalewski said it was obvious that Putin and Medvedev were trying to test President-elect Obama by being "excessively provocative."

¶15. (U) Rep. Schwartz has cleared this message.

